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CA Senate District 26

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Immediate Release
February 27, 2008

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African American Legislative Policy Directors Honored at Staff Appreciation Luncheon

Sacramento---Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas and the California Legislative Black Caucus hosted the 2nd Annual African American Staff Appreciation Luncheon: "A Celebration of Exceptional Leadership and Service," Wednesday, February 20, 2008 from 11:30 to 1:30 at Vizcaya, 2019 21st Street. Sacramento.

Two African American policy directors; Gareth Elliott, from the office of Don Perata, President pro Tempore of the Senate, and Arnie Sowell from the office of Fabian Nunez, Speaker of the Assembly, were presented with beautiful Rosestained Book Clock awards for the dedicated service and expertise.

"As elected officials, we rely heavily on our staff. Without competent, quality staff, we simply could not do our jobs," said Senator Ridley-Thomas. "A good staffer must have many qualities -- a quick read, an analytical mind, and clear communication skills, plus show good judgment and an even temperament."

"Gareth Elliot and Arnie Sowell have demonstrated all of these qualities in abundance. More impressively, in working for the Senate President Pro Tem and the Speaker of the Assembly, respectively, they have also shown the ability to handle the demands placed on them by numerous other members of the Legislature and their staff, all with grace and confidence."

Nearly 100 African Americans staffers feasted on salmon, shrimp and crab cakes while listening to music provided by The Garrett Perkins Project.

Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas also acknowledged members of the Legislative Black Caucus, who were on hand to present the awards. They included Senator Ed Vincent, Assembly Member Karen Bass, Assembly Member Curren Price, Assembly Member Amina Carter and Assembly Member Mike Davis.

Arnie Sowell told the gathering; "It is important for African-American staff to work on a variety of policy and fiscal issues. Recently, I have focused my attention on issues related to the environment, climate change, and environmental justice because of their unique and significant importance to communities of color as well as those related to telecommunications policy.

"I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work for the longest tenured Speaker in the pre-term limit era, Willie Brown, and the longest tenured in Speaker in the post-term limit era, Fabian Núñez. They have each entrusted me with assignments that have been challenging and allowed me to grow professionally.

Gareth Elliott was unable to attend due to illness.

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